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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ADDIS ABABA 001198

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SUBJECT: ETHIOPIA-ERITREA: SRSG ENNIFAR PROVIDES UNMEE  
UPDATE

Classified By: Ambassador Donald Yamamoto. Reason: 1.4 (B).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. Acting Special Representative of the Secretary General Azouz Ennifar told the diplomatic community

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on April 29 that the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) was coming to an end and that all of the contingent owned equipment would be shipped out of Eritrea within weeks. Ennifar said that the fate of the UN owned equipment was unclear. He briefed that the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) was divided over the fate of UNMEE and that the April 22 consultations in New York had not provided a clear way forward. UNMEE Addis Ababa Head of Office Joseph Stephanides postulated that Eritrean President Isaias' strategy was to push Ethiopia into withdrawing from the Algiers Agreement to seal UNMEE's fate and claim victory over the border decision. Regarding the Eritrea-Djibouti border Dispute at Ras Doumeira, the French Ambassador briefed that both governments appeared committed to avoiding conflict, and that the French government was not sure what the Djiboutian government wanted from them. END SUMMARY.

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MOVEMENT OF CONTINGENT OWNED EQUIPMENT TO MASSAWA UNDERWAY  
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¶2. (C) Ennifar opened by stating that UNMEE was "close to the end." He said that all of the contingent owned equipment (COE) would be in Massawa and shipped out of Eritrea within a few weeks. Ennifar stated that the transportation of the COE was proceeding smoothly and that the local contractors were working out well. He noted the Eritrean government had given the contractors 70,000 liters of fuel to move the containers and vehicles. Ennifar said that the first ship would dock in Massawa on April 29 or 30 and pickup the Jordanian equipment. Several more ships would be arriving in Massawa within days. The remaining 162-man rear party of Indian and Jordanian troops would depart Eritrea once the equipment has been shipped, leaving a small civilian staff behind. Ennifar added that the Force Commander and his staff had relocated to Addis Ababa.

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FATE OF UN OWNED EQUIPMENT UNCLEAR  
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¶3. (C) Ennifar said that he did not know what would happen to the UN owned equipment that remained in the Temporary Security Zone (TSZ). The Eritrean government refused to take responsibility for it and UNMEE had no access to the equipment because the force is no longer allowed inside the TSZ. UNMEE estimated the depreciated value of the equipment

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to be in between USD 2-3 million. He noted that most of the equipment was infrastructure, living quarters, furniture, and at least 75 large generators. All remaining satellite dishes and other communication equipment had been removed or disabled.

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UN SECURITY COUNCIL DIVIDED OVER WAY FORWARD  
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¶4. (C) The UNSC is divided and the April 22 consultations in New York had provided no clear way forward, according to Ennifar. He said that the United States wanted to terminate UNMEE by May 31, and that others on the council recognized that UNMEE was coming to an end, but wanted to explore other options first. He reminded the group that the Secretary General's April 7 report laid out four options and noted that, of the four options, Eritrea was never going to lift its restrictions on UNMEE or accept a new mission. Regarding a possible mission on only the Ethiopian side of the border, he thought Ethiopia might consider it although he noted that no formal proposal had been made to the Ethiopian government.

¶5. (C) Ennifar assessed that the UNSC had not decided on UNMEE's future for two reasons. First, some UNSC members

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were preoccupied with the increased risk of war if UNMEE left, and they did not want to assume responsibility for pulling the mission out. Second, some members supported the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission's (EEBC) demarcation by geographic coordinates decision (aka virtual demarcation) while others did not. The Belgian Ambassador added that there were two strong views in the council that have "prohibited productive consensus," and that it was difficult to come up with an inventive solution. The French Ambassador said that his government supported the EEBC decision because it is the only option, but that privately they felt that virtual demarcation was "absolute stupidity." He added that his government did not consider virtual demarcation to be the end of the process.

¶6. (C) In response to a query, Ennifar said that the UN had not made any determination on the validity of the virtual demarcation decision. He said there were two opposing schools of thought among legal scholars on this issue, and that it was not the UN's place to make such a judgment.

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ISAIAS' GRAND STRATEGY?  
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¶7. (C) UNMEE Addis Ababa Head of Office Stephanides postulated that Isaias' strategy in maintaining a maximalist position on the border--demanding UN Chapter VII action to force Ethiopia to withdraw from the disputed territory and insisting that the EEBC virtual demarcation decision consummated the Algiers Agreement--was designed to force Ethiopia to withdraw from the Algiers Agreement. In doing so, Isaias would be able to discard some aspects of the post-war fall-out he did not like, including the TSZ and UNMEE, while holding on to a "legitimate" claim to Badme and other areas to be "cashed in" sometime in the future.

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UPDATE ON ERITREA-DJIBOUTI BORDER DISPUTE  
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18. (C) The French Ambassador, at Ennifar's request, briefed that both Eritrea and Djibouti appeared committed to resolving their border dispute through diplomatic means, although he noted that both countries were acting contradictory. He said that a few hundred Eritrean troops were several hundred meters inside Djiboutian territory, and not the 10-15 kilometers claimed by the Djiboutian government. The Ambassador stated that Isaias and Djiboutian President Guelleh had talked by phone and that generals from each army had met. He said that the French government did not really understand what the Djiboutian government wanted from them and that there appeared to be a lack of coordination between the civilian and security components of the Djiboutian government. He added that the Ethiopian government intended to keep a low profile on this issue. He declined to speculate on Isaias' motives for the incursion.

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COMMENT  
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19. (C) While Isaias' strategy over the border remains unclear, we do assess that if the current trend continues with no condemnation of UNMEE's expulsion and militarization of the TSZ, the Ethiopian government's threat to withdraw from the Algiers Accord may well be executed. While their withdrawal would not necessarily presage conflict, it will most certainly raise the temperature along an already smoldering border. END COMMENT.  
YAMAMOTO